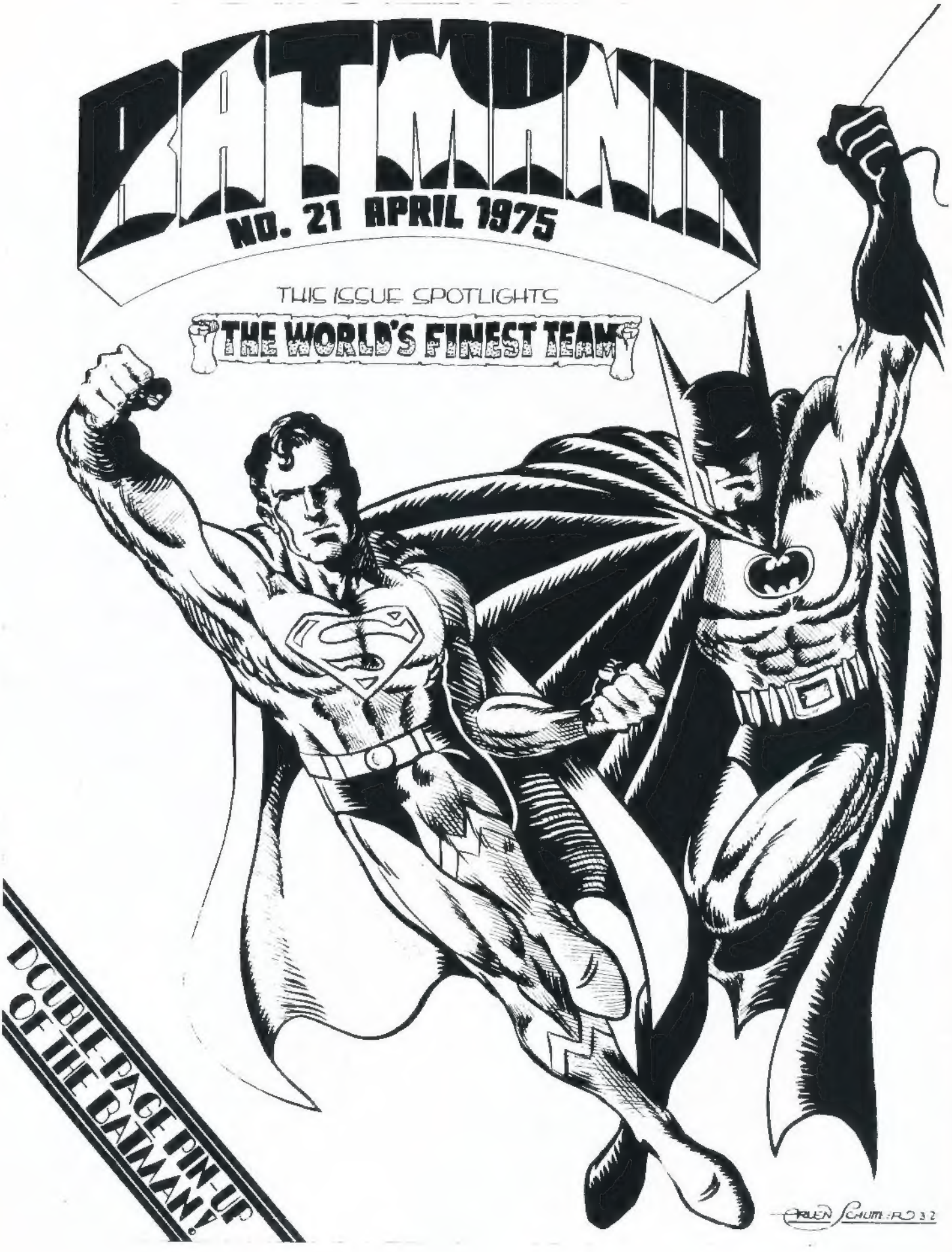
BATMANIA
NO. 21 APRIL 1975
THIS ISSUE SPOTLIGHTS
THE WORLD'S FINEST TEAM
DOUBLE-PAGE PIN-UP OF THE BATMAN!
ERWIN SCHUMER 32

BILJO WHITE
Editor Emeritus

RICH MORRISSEY
Editor

HUBERT MALLORY
Assistant Editor

ARLEN SCHUMER
Art Director

BATMANIA

THE FANZINE FOR BATMAN FANS

Our objective--to join together those who enjoy reading, collecting and watching the adventures of the Batman and Robin

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ECHOES FROM THE BAT-CAVE

Out of the numerous (well, three) suggestions of titles for this column, I've decided on this one--originally used by Marty Arbunich and Steve Kelez for their column in the old Gotham Gazette, and suggested by the invaluable Mike Valerio.

As I was forced out of the last issue by a last-minute ad, I wasn't able to comment on the response to the revival of the Batmanians--but it hasn't been at all encouraging, either then or now. Very few people seem interested in the idea of having regional Chieftains as they did in Biljo White's day, but isn't anyone at least interested in running against Tom Fagan for the Number One position?

And speaking of Tom, #20's article about the annual Rutland parade has drawn a couple of vehement objections from individuals mentioned in it. Bob Polio has demanded that I deny any implication of a romantic interest between him and Irene Vartanoff--and I hasten to do so. To Ken Gale, however--I'm willing to admit that there may be some subtle distinction between "planning" and "promising" to put out a fanzine (in particular, Green Lantern's Light) but in my present state of lethargy (I've been awake for 28 of the last 33 hours, what with my weekend job as a security guard and my determination to get this issue to the printer tomorrow) I just can't see it. I'm sorry, but I stand behind that statement--and incidentally, I haven't seen GLL even yet!

Marty Greim also pointed out that the mansion in which Tom once lived is not, as I said, on Nichols Street. Oh, well... And of course, the Batmanians' favorite cover of 1974, that of Detective #439, was not drawn by Jim Aparo but by Neal Adams. And now that I'm completely square--

As an enlisted Inflation Fighter, I feel like a hypocrite raising the price of Batmania--and by 100%, yet, at the very time when the initial four-issue subscriptions are beginning to run out. And yet it's been consistently losing more money than I can afford, and now there's talk of an increase in postal rates--so if Ford's own government can't keep prices down, how can I?

And I hope the new look--reduced pages with higher-quality printing--will make this 21st "coming of age" issue of Batmania worth $1.00. Comic Oddities was forced out this time around, but Jay Zilber's increasingly-popular Update is back--and the BATMAN Index in this and the next issue continues Ray Miller's series. The centerspread was concieved and executed entirely by Arlen Schumer, who (forgive me if I sound like Allan Asherman) is eagerly awaiting your reaction.

This is a sort of "Special Superman Issue," as I chanced upon a couple of interesting articles about the Kryptonian Crimebuster--and to fit the theme, decided to update Robert Jennings' 1965 article (in Batmania #11) on the magazine where Superman and our favorite regularly get together. Alas, I found even less to be happy about now than he did then--but maybe I'll reprint his original article for those of you who haven't seen it. It's up to you.

I hope you won't have to wait as long for the next issue as you did for this one.--RHM

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Issue No. 21 April 1975

The WORLD'S FINEST Team of Heroes - II

by Rich Morrissey

In 1965, Mort Weisinger had held the editorship of World's Finest Comics for a year. The magazine headlined a joint adventure of Superman and Batman, as it had since 1954, but the fact that Weisinger already had six books on his schedule had forced him to drop the old Green Arrow and Aquaman backup stories in favor of a reprint "Surprise Feature." This in turn was just now being replaced by an "Editor's Round Table," which reprinted a great variety of six-page DC tales from the '50's on (and incidentally, relieved Weisinger of even selecting the reprints).

Weisinger's general handling of the Superman-Batman team has evoked mixed reaction in fandom, but on the whole a far better one than most of his editorial efforts had. Although most of his Superman titles were aimed, unfortunately but realistically, at the younger readers, he seemed to be slanting World's Finest toward a somewhat older audience. In my opinion, he was doing quite a creditable job at this time--his early over-reliance on such gimmicky parallels as the Olsen-Robin team had given way to relatively mature plots and intelligent characterization of the two principals.

Edmond Hamilton, that master of space opera and sometimes more modern science fiction, was already beginning to tire of the comics field--but appeared determined to do some good work before he departed. Although most of the plots were standard Weisinger fare--Superman and Batman visited a planet of gamblers, experimented with a Kryptonian evolution machine, visited a parallel world where they had criminal counterparts--they were written intelligently and believably, with good art by the team of Curtis Swan and George Klein.

WF #153 introduced another of Mort's innovations, the "Imaginary Story" to the magazine, but this one too was nicely done; a tragic tale in which Batman was led to believe that Superman had killed his father and ended up sacrificing his life to redeem himself and save Superman. #154 introduced the concept of Imaginary sons of the pair, in a piece where they brilliantly captured a criminal midget. A later story had the Sons battling the sons of Bat-Mite and Mxyzptlk; not good, but not for many years were fans to learn the depths to which such a concept could sink.

In 1966 some new talents, such as 13-year-old writer Jim Shooter, began to enter the field Ever the history buff, Shooter came up with a tale of King Arthur's court, "Pawns of the Jousting Master"--it showed signs of inexperience, like the overly-sudden way the true nature of the heroes' allies was revealed, but some fine action sequences made up for it. Other stories weren't as successful; the "Fatal Forecasts of Dr. Zodiac" (#160) turned out to be entirely a hoax "to lure wanted criminals out of hiding." Of course any jury would acquit Dr. Zodiac in a minute on grounds of entrapment; he was the dupe of a very involved and surprisingly successful scheme.

Coincidence reared its ugly head again in "The Danger of the Deadly Duo," (#166) which pitted the descendants of Superman and Batman in the 30th century against the Joker's descendant and another crook, Muto (as far as I can tell, he wasn't descended from Luthor). Though it wasn't listed as imaginary, it didn't fit in with any other DC versions of the 30th century--not even the Legion of Super-Heroes series, which Hamilton and Weisinger also did--but even it made some rudimentary attempts at atmosphere, with the new Batman's origin very like the original.

The next issue's admitted Imaginary Tale, "The New Superman-Batman Team," was the first published story by an obscure Ohio fan, Cary Bates. An interesting plot, with Clark Kent becoming Batman and Lex Luthor Superman--but his dialogue ("What a trick--and a treat! Is my face red!") was about ten times as embarrassing as it is today. This issue's high point was really the Editor's Round Table: "The Three Prophecies," a Jack Kirby story with one of the most genuinely ironic endings I've ever seen.

Fortunately, Jim Shooter was now really hitting his stride. He gave us "The Executioner's List," (#171), a realistic Korean War revenge story, the very dramatic "Superman and Batman... Brothers" (#172), which had an inker and letterer that are still a mystery to me, and "The Jekyll-Hyde Heroes," (#173) a dramatic tale of plot and counterplot that brought back Two-Face (to all intents and purposes) for the first time in 14 years and may have inspired his later revival in Batman's own book.

It was around this time that Carmine Infantino became National's Editorial Director. Under his direction a greater cohesiveness began to develop between the various titles--writers and artists who had hitherto worked for only one editor now had their talents spread around. Mort Weisinger now found his old staff augmented by a number of the company's other people, who gave many of his titles another new look--and World's Finest was no exception.

#174 was drawn by Pete Costanza and Jack Abel; its cover was by Neal Adams--who did the inside stories as well in the following two issues! After another Costanza piece and one by Swan and Jack Abel (George Klein had died), Ross Andru and Mike Esposito took over on a regular basis. They were favorites of Infantino, though of relatively few others, so it seems he considered World's Finest a title of some importance. (I might add that he seems to have a similar attachment to Bob Oksner's art; witness his incessant use of this artist on covers even when Curt Swan or Kurt Schaffenberger does the inside art.)

#175, by the way, introduced an annual "Duel of Wits" between Superman and Batman--apparently a regular affair, yet one that had never been seen before (unless it had its beginning with "The Game of Secret Identities" in #149) nor has ever been seen again. A pity; it had some very imaginative puzzles the heroes set each other--though Superman was very lucky to happen to have a radiation detector just when he needed it!

And #181 contained a truly unique story in which Superman and Batman were kidnapped by a super-powered and super-scientific race that claimed them for its remote ancestors--and turned out to be super-evolved Bizarros from the remote future. Leo Dorfman scripted #183(WF and Adventure were now offering credits off and on--the first of Weisinger's books to do so), which had an incredible mischaracterization--who could believe that Lex Luthor would ever want to be "pals" with Superman, corrupted or not? A Cary Bates look at a planet of gamblers (an idea Hamilton had used to far better effect in #150) and a hackneyed Revolutionary War time trip by Bob Kanigher that spread through two issues of historical inaccuracy, evil spirits and untimely coincidence didn't do much for the book, either.

When Bob Haney, the most variable writer in the business, began to do some stories, the book improved very noticeably. #192 and #193 contained a tense thriller in which our heroes were confined in a foreign prison camp. It did commit one unpardonable sin--having a powerless Superman actually defeat Batman in a fist-fight (though he did have the advantage of surprise). The next two issues pitted the World's Finest team against the Mafia, and somehow managed to get away with using the word despite numerous pressure groups (I've heard several theories on this--one fan even theorized National was run by the Mafia, and had "inside permission...")

WF #196 was Mort Weisinger's last issue, and its "Kryptonite Express" fadeout filled the whole book for the first time. Curt Swan also returned for one last fling, together with inker George Roussos, as Superman and Batman took steps to collect an immense volley of kryptonite meteors that had landed on Earth--the classic case of wasted effort, as only a few months later all kryptonite on the planet was transmuted into iron! But Julius Schwartz was to take over the title; perhaps better things were in the air...

No sooner did he do so, however, than he took a shocking step--he dropped Batman from the magazine, replacing him with other DC heroes in a Brave & Bold type format! Dick Dillin took over the art; the book had its memorable moments (such as the final admission that the Flash is faster than Superman) but was rarely one of Schwartz' better titles, generally falling back on unlikely hypotheses by writers whose primary interests were elsewhere.

On three occasions Schwartz did, almost grudgingly, allow the Darknight Detective back into the book. "Vengeance of the Tomb-Thing," in #202, cover-depicted a fight scene between Superman and Batman that it insisted "was not imaginary...nor any other sort of cop-out!" But of course it was; this in fact was the swan-song of the Superman robots, and the last of them was battling Batman. This Denny O'Neil story did get rid of an overused and tiresome plot device (by having the robots' delicate mechanisms affected by the polluted atmosphere), but Superman himself came through in a rather negative light--call me old-fashioned, but I like my heroes to be heroes! As for Batman, he could easily have been left out

without affecting the story one whit.

Len Wein's "A Matter of Light and Death" in #207 was much better--indeed, it was one of the best WF stories to appear under Schwartz' editorship. It told of a highly involved plan by the roving villain, Dr. Light, to destroy Superman--and remain personally uninvolved by hypnotizing an unsuspecting deputy (none other than Clark Kent!) to subcontract the murder and supply the weapon. This time the world's greatest detective was very definitely needed to unravel the plot, and he and his Kryptonian partner did so in masterful style.

#211 gave us "Fugitive from the Stars," an uneven Denny O'Neil piece about a fugitive from a dictatorial alien world, culminating in "the old switcheroo" that dates back to old Doc Light's first appearance and before. I've heard it said that O'Neil never cared for working with Superman, but I've known him to do far better by him.

Aside from these three stories and a handful of cameos, Batman did not appear in WF during Schwartz' reign--but that reign was soon to come to an end. With the January 1973 issue, Schwartz gave up WF to assume the editorship of Action Comics, and bring Superman's solo adventures all under a single editor once more. In exchange, WF was turned over to former Action editor Murray Boltinoff.

Boltinoff had some promising credentials for the post. In his hands Superboy had put most of the other Superman titles to shame in general excellence, and he brought with him writer Bob Haney, who had written many of Weisinger's better WF tales. He had also proven he could maintain a high standard of quality with Batman in Brave & Bold--if only Boltinoff would put Batman into the book again on a regular basis, think what could be accomplished...!

Well, Boltinoff did put Batman back into the book, but that was just about the only good thing he did. His first issue, #215, featured "Saga of the Super-Sons," which at first looked for all the world like a Weisinger Imaginary Story; the duo once again was saddled with teenage sons, Clark Jr. and Bruce Jr. (originality in names was never one of DC's strong points).

But on that issue's text page, Haney insisted that "it is not imaginary, but real, the way it happened. How so? Despite all the issues published on the amazing careers of these two greatest of all super-heroes, not every facet of their lives could possibly be covered. Both have lived a hundred lives in one, are bigger than ordinary reality, inimitable, and immortal. Thus, this issue gives you just one other, previously undisclosed portion of their unique stories." Now do you understand? No? Neither did anyone else.

And to add to the confusion, the internal evidence seemed to place the story squarely in the present, and Superman Jr. possessed only half his father's powers in direct opposition to past precedent. (e.g. the offspring of Van-Zee and Sylvia dewitt.) And it would be completely unfair to compar this story with a Weisinger Imaginary Tale--the Imaginary Tales, at least, always had an interesting and logical plot.

The Super-Sons were always--always quarreling with their fathers as only Bob Haney teenagers can. (This rang particularly false in Batman, Jr.'s case--after so few quarrels with Dick Grayson while he was growing up, would Bruce Wayne have so much more friction with his own son?) And the Sons seemed to be right most of the time, making the "world's greatest superheroes" look like fools.

After they had totally wasted two issues, along came Metamorpho in an even more ridiculous story that presented Superman and Batman as jealous clods who came within a hair of defecting from America becuse Metomorpho had gained greater abilities than theirs! Uh-huh. After this Metamorpho split off into his own feature, becoming WF's first new backup in nine years. It seemed that the Superman-Batman team had come full circle in the magazine, once more claiming only a 12-page lead feature. "Who is Capricorn" in #218 was a passable story about a telepathic blackmailer, but the following two issues sank to a new low with an abysmal ripoff of the Swamp Thing and the Count of Monte-Cristo.

Then the Super-Sons returned in what might almost have been two decent full-length stories otherwise--but Haney would insist on them. With #223, the book jumped to a Superspec format--and for once had a really good story involving Deadman and a mad brother of Bruce Wayne. Maybe the book would make it--but the next issue the Super-Sons returned in their worst story yet! The villain, this time a $6,000,000 Man ripoff, was so obvious I was sure the apparent suspect was a red herring--only he wasn't.

#225 introduced Tex Blaisdell as Dillin's permanent inker, on the tolerably-good "Bow Before Satan's Children" (booklengthers were now once more the customary order of business). The following two issues, guesting Metamorpho and Deadman in succession, raised the distinct possibility that the magazine was once more on the upward swing.

But World's Finest #228 had the Super-Sons meet Robin--who, unbelievably, appeared to be still in college! I've heard of being held back, but this is ridiculous, even though in this story he acted as if he deserved it. He and Batman Jr. spent the whole story sniping over who was to succeed the late Batman, at one point actually expecting him to reveal his identity in his will! Incidentally, this story also shot down the one remaining explanation for the Super-Sons--that they lived in the present on Earth-2.

#229 had a rather pointless reprint from #94 that had already been rehashed twice--and #230 had Curt Swan vainly trying to save yet another Super-Sons thing. This one had imperishable dialogue like "I figured you'd be busy doing what fellers your age do" from Superman and Batman. (What's that? Oh, you see, Batman wasn't really dead in the previous Super-Sons piece. Even in an imaginary story, Haney had to cop out...)

Why do Messrs. Boltinoff and Haney insist on trash like this, instead of the good work any Brave & Bold reader knows they're capable of? Boltinoff once admitted to me that the Super-Sons are sheer fantasy, but they sell. But we all know that better things can sell too, especially when associated with such superstars as Superman and Batman. Like Robert Jennings before me, all I can do is continue to bombard Boltinoff, and get others to do the same, with demands for improvement. Let's make World's Finest a comic that lives up to its name, rather than being the greatest misnomer this side of Modesty Blaise!

by Jay L. Zilber

One of the problems in publishing a single-purpose or single-theme fanzine (like Batmania) is that the contributors and readers tend to get so rapt with enthusism in that purpose or theme that they unconsciously ignore its shortcomings and faults.

The purpose of this column is to review Batman comics from recent months on a continuing basis. Some may accuse me of being too harsh, but I think it is important that we keep an open mind here. I am not as much of a Batman enthusiast as some people are, but I do have a great deal of interest in the character, and when handled well Batman is one of the best characters in contemporary comics. However, like most comics currently on the market, his books are often not up to full potential, and there are certain particular faults that continuously reappear month after month, as I hope these analyses will illustrate.

* * * *

Batman #258: Here we have the return of the one villain in comics who annoys me more than any other: Two-Face. Since his actions are determined entirely by chance, depending on which side his coin falls, writer Denny O'Neil can easily twist the events of a Two-Face story any way he pleases by having the coin flipped to either a conveniently marred or a conveniently unmarred side. And in this issue's "Threat of the Two-Headed Coin," it looks as if he was overwhelmed by the urge to use convenient gimmicks, as he shamelessly goes so far as to hide a thermal flare in Batman's batear with which he can escape Two-Face's trap.

Then, of course, there's Denny's almost mandatory gimmick, which extremely few of his Batman stories do not include, by which Batman (and Robin this time) blunder right into that trap, despite their at least above-average intelligence ...this time Batman just stands there while Two-Face shoots him with a dart-gun (conveniently nothing more lethal). What happened to the almost superhuman way Batman would lunge forward and knock the evildoer silly with his feet, before he/she/it had a chance to fire?

I'm going to ignore the completely artificial chain of events that led Harris (Two-Face's accomplice) to leap to his death from a 15th-story window...an equally artificial and unlikely result of those events.

If nothing else, I did enjoy the Joker crossover which set the stage for the Joker/Two-Face battle in The Joker #1. But that was hardly enough to salvage the story--even the fifties reprint in #259 was more credible in its own, innocent way.

* * * *

Batman #259: This second Batman/Shadow meeting was far superior to the first, though it still fell short of my expectations. Why, Mr. O'Neil, did you have to insert that sequence in which Bruce W. saves himself from certain death in a falling elevator with a conveniently placed access ladder in the elevator shaft? Surely you could have come up with a more reasonable, less gimmicky way to have Willy Hank attempt revenge on poor old Brucey-boy.

It must be almost embarrasing for Denny to have Batman meet the Shadow, the character after whom Batman should be patterned to a far greater extent than he has been lately. The Shadow would never be accidentally captured, nor conveniently find a gimmick by which he could save himself. In fact, The Shadow has been portrayed in his own book as a far-more-creature-of-the-night-ish character than Batman himself has been in some time.

* * * *

Batman #260: Cute...cute...

Apparently the recent return of the Joker in Batman #251 sold remarkably well, because he's back again already. Pleasantly enough, it was perhaps Denny's best story since #251. The plot was hardly anything spectacular, but the actual writing, the technique and style, was unusually gripping--one could really feel the frustration Batman must have felt each time he tried to catch up with the Joker and could only burst into hysterical laughter. Despite the light-hearted humor interspersed throughout the story, the tone was deadly serious, and Novick's portrayal of the laughing Batman was hauntingly superb.

However, I must question the ending, which was of a semi-cop-out nature. Batman has been injected with a drug that causes him to become hysterical in non-humorous situations, and he overcame its effects by thinking about truly humorous situations, the Marx Brothers' movies. Mighty lucky that the drug worked in reverse, isn't it?

* * * *

Batman #261: In at least one respect, this story had potential--no costumed villain. Batman behaved, more appropriately, like THE Batman again (the prefix "The" is rapidly growing tiresome, but it's shorter than the equally worn-out "creature-of-the-night" and less outright corny than "dark-night detective," so bear with it). The almost lawless vigilante surfaced in him again--witness how he violently knocks Eddy around the room until he gets the information he needs. The balloon deathtrap was well-handled as deathtraps go, but the convenient presence of the balloon at all was not above curious scrutiny.

Unfortunately, we were treated this time to not one but TWO of those O'Neil standard plot devices--as Batman described it, "I allowed myself to be slugged from behind twice, like a stupid beginner!" If Bruce Wayne had a nickel for every Denny O'Neil story in which Batman is stupidly overcome, he'd double his financial assets overnight! It's all very well and good to have Batman's human-ness surface once in a while--if he NEVER made mistakes, Batman would rapidly lose credibility as a believable comics feature--but why must

it be basically the same mistakes every time, and why so often?

* * * *

Batman #262: Ernie Chua's art on Batman was being touted as virtually the best thing to happen to the feature since Robin went to college...at least, that's how the fandom grapevine was buzzing before Chua's work appeared on the stands. His debut this issue was impressive, considering his previous inexperience with super-hero books, but certainly not as impressive as one might have expected from all the rumors. A bit more refined than Novick, perhaps, but not really all that different (at least not with the same inker, Dick Giordano). In fact, while I have no real distaste for the Chua version, I think I'm going to miss Novick, especially his distinctive style on facial features.

Meanwhile ("the most time-honored caption in comics history," as Tony Isabella is fond of saying), this month's story featured the return of the Scarecrow. Perhaps the single most appropriate and believable costumed foe in Batman's "rogues' gallery," I had been looking forward to this one. After all, the Scarecrow and Batman are much alike--both trying to, you should excuse the cliche expression, strike fear into the hearts of their opponents. And unlike the others, the Scarecrow has no really bizarre neurotic focus.

But the entire story was a major disappointment. The Scarecrow comes up with a "gimmick" after all--a device which evokes great fear (at long range) in the person whom it is aimed at. Batman overcomes it, simply by convincing himself that there's nothing to be afraid of. The whole theme of the plot was far too similar to that of the last Joker story; the parallels were obvious, but there were none of those factors here that made the other story so fascinating. Maybe the amusement park backdrop was supposed to have supplied some element of the macabre, but it failed to do so (perhaps because of a poor coloring job, which was too bright and cheerful).

The most annoying aspect of the entire issue was the 18-page length of the story, while the book itself was a 68-page giant, which is supposed to carry between 20 and 25 pages of new material. Presumably this issue was to have been a regular-sized one, but in any event somebody's responsible for some mighty poor planning.

* * * *

Batman #263: With this issue's return of the Riddler, there can be no further doubt that Denny and editor Schwartz have decided that The Batman just isn't in vogue any more. This year has seen the "second comings" of half a dozen previously-missing-in-action costumed foes, and the "creature of the night" has slowly dwindled away. Instead, Batman has now become something between that and the camp version, with supervillains and deathtraps every month. Even the old Bat-hardware is resurfacing, with the resurrection of that 1950's relic, the whirly-bat. Stories are heavily formularized, almost invariably centering on one of two plots--Batman meets one of his costumed enemies, or Batman meets the Shadow, making stupid, amateurish mistakes all the while. Angles like Bruce Wayne's social life, the Wayne Foundation, the Victims Inc. Program, subplots concerning Alfred or Commissioner Gordon--all forgotten for all intents and purposes.

But regardless of the camp "ingredients" in this story, it had a serious "taste" to it, and was at least barely "palatable." The Riddler was well-characterized, faithful to his last appearance so many years ago, and he gave the story a sort of charm. Palatable, yes...but not preferable.

At any rate, perhaps a new slant in story direction is in the works, now that both Batman and Detective are monthly, as Denny O'Neil is joined, and in effect replaced to some extent, by such characters as Elliot Maggin, Mike Uslan, Mike Fleisher, David V. Reed (alias Coram Nobis) and even (God forbid) Cary Bates. But Maggin's Batman could be something to look forward to. He's hit some pretty low points with Superman, but one must recall that Superman is not a very serious, moody strip as Batman is/should be. And one must also recall Maggin's debut Green Arrow story, which was serious and moody.

* * * *

At this point, it would be interesting to check out the last few issues of Brave and Bold, which has not been heavily considered in these pages before. B&B is a rather peculiar entity in that is edited by Murray Boltinoff, which would normally mean that I automatically do not like it; but B&B is not only Murray's best book, it is in many ways one of DC's best. Often, writer Bob

Haney outdoes Denny O'Neil in certain areas, although not always--the quality of Haney's scripts is rather uneven. Jim Aparo's art has improved considerably in the past year or two, always very nice to look at. Not that I don't have any bones to pick here...

Brave & Bold #114: A nice, fast-paced story, but the main event of the issue was seeing Jim Aparo drawing Aquaman again, for the first time in years. Sheer ecstasy!!!

Batman/Aquaman is a well-paired team, since Aquaman is not too fantastic nor unlike Batman to begin with, having no sensational super-powers (and in his own kingdom, none at all!). One rather annoying mistake marred the issue, although it could conceivably be explained or rationalized. Aquaman forced a jet down in the middle of the ocean to prevent it from landing in Gotham City, because a disguised H-bomb aboard the jet would have detonated the moment the plane landed. It seems Gotham airport is slightly below sea level, and the bomb would be triggered below sea level. So Aquaman downs the plane in the middle of the ocean? You can't get much higher than below sea level if you're underwater.

* * * *

Brave & Bold #115: The aesthetics of a Batman-meets-somebody team-up are admittedly difficult to satisfy. If the other character is too much like Batman, the story may tend to be uninteresting. If the other character is too unlike him, the credibility of the team existing to begin with is at stake. Batman out on a case with the Atom looks pretty unlikely.

But it wasn't. Batman never actually met the Atom--Batman "died!" And the Atom reduced himself into Batman's brain to get him going again. Perhaps a little too fantastic, but certainly intriguing to say the least. Much more interesting than the kind of things the Atom does in his Action Comics back-up, to be sure. Aparo's cellular-level art was also verrrrrrry interesting, and Haney's characterization of a grim, vicious Batman brutally lashing out at Cathcart was beautiful!

But again, the trademark of a Murray Boltinoff book appeared as usual--a near-fatal error. The Atom "shrinks down with himself" a TV-receiver so that, while he's inside Batman's brain, he can see where he's going. But as all loyal Atom devotees know, Ray Palmer's experiments on shrinking anything EXCEPT himself have been failures. The TV receiver should have exploded like everything else he's tried to shrink. Maybe some explanation or excuse could be fabricated to explain how it stayed intact but it's a tribute to Murray that just about every story that comes out of his office has one of these little errors...

* * * *

Brave & Bold #116: In the beginning, there was no doubt about it. The Spectre was an Earth-2 character. But then, on the order of ten years ago, The Spectre met, in two different stories appearing in B&B, Batman and the Flash--both Earth-1 variety superheroes. And that's when the trouble started. Then the Spectre was chained to "The Book," then his book was cancelled, then he reappeared in a JLA/JSA team-up, only to appear further in the story in some kind of crypt (without explanation), only to die at the end of the issue. Then a new series of Spectre stories began running in Adventure, which seemed not to tie in with either the Earth-2 version or the potential Earth-1 Spec (according to Nelson Bridwell, the Earth-1 version of the Spectre is Deadman--if you can't trust Nelson Bridwell, who can you trust?). To finally compound the confusion, Batman again meets the Spectre in B&B, and again some questions are raised. Not just "Is this the Earth-2 Spectre somehow, or some unknown Earth-1 version," but more important, "How can this be the same Spectre now in Adventure Comics (whom it's supposed to be) since that Spectre is only concerned with killing evildoers in the name of God, and this latest version in B&B is actually trying to bring criminals to justice through legal means?

After you get through trying to figure all that out, the story (which wasn't very good to begin with) doesn't have much left...

* * * *

Brave & Bold #117: Every time Batman meets Sgt. Rock, I have this peculiar gut feeling that somebody's making a mistake. It's already been established in the first B&B Batman/Rock team-up that a "youthful" Batman met Sgt. Rock during World War II. Even so, if these Batman/Rock stories are supposed to be contemporary, it would put Batman in his late forties. No go, folks. These stories would almost have to be taking place on Earth-2, where Batman is in his late fories or so. But the longer this kind of team-up goes on, the more trouble this aging factor is going to make. It's that kind of factor that should be considered more often before deciding whom to team up with Batman this month.

Forgetting that business for a moment, the story had a basically interesting premise--a man whom Sgt. Rock thought he had executed during the war (named Cathcart, just like the guy in the Atom story!) comes back to "haunt" him. But unknown to Rock, the execution was a phony, and Cathcart was now working as a spy in East Germany. But WHY... WHY, may I be so bold as to ask, couldn't Army HQ just TELL Rock what was going on? They could trust Batman, couldn't they? Why not Rock?

* * * *

Brave & Bold #118: I'm not particularly fond of Wildcat, and the fact that he doesn't have a feature in any DC book except for his sporadic B&B appearances makes me wonder why Murray is so fond of him. Certainly, being such an unfamiliar character, he can't be much of a sales-getter. And a Batman/Wildcat team-up, considering Wildcat's strong similarities to Batman in costume, methods, etc., doesn't seem to bee, in itself, a reader-appealing format. No doubt it was the guest appearance of the Joker that was to be the main feature of the story...and indeed it was. Haney's characterization and Aparo's rendition of the Joker are far superior to O'Neil's and Novick's. I only question whether or not this "Jokersploitation" is going too far.

And as usual, there was a major error. The Joker dives into the harbor to save the dog that carries the fever germs that he's been infected with, but cries out, "Oh, nooo...I forgot! I can't swim!" But the Joker most certainly can swim. Remember how he got his unusual coloring, by SWIMMING through a contaminated river to escape Batman?

* * * *

That just about wraps everything up for this month. Next issue, a look at Len Wein's Detective Comics serial, the new Joker book, and more. In closing I shall take advantage of a timeless tradition, and shamelessly plug Fandom Funnies, the first quality fandom humorzine. Featuring a parody of The Comic Reader with a cover by Frank Brunner, a comic strip written by Rich Morrissey himself (dutifully drawn by Mercy Van Vlack) entitled "SHALOM! The Original Kaptain Kosher," and much much more. Thousands have had the opportunity to buy Fandom Funnies at 85¢, but for a limited time only, it's STILL available for 85¢ from:

Jay L. Zilber
Oberlin College Mail Room
Box 2863
Oberlin, Ohio 44074

So you don't forget, send before midnight tonight. "It slices! It dices! It does everything around the kitchen!"

THE BATMANIANS SPEAK

Dear Rich,

Happy New Year. I've been meaning to write you about Batmania but law school takes up an awful lot of time, and since when it comes to crastinating, I'm a pro, I've managed not to get around to it until my Christmas vacation. Hopefully better late than never.

Batmania just continues to improve and for that you should be congratulated. The covers on #20 are nice. If you intend to use the logo Biljo designed, I approve. The back cover is nice, and, being set in the country, ties in nicely with the Rutland article. When I first saw it, the Batman looked like his torso was misproportioned. I don't know whether it's me or Al's work but Al has a tendency to come up with drawings which at first look badly drawn and on second sight I realize they are technically right. But Al definitely is one of the better fan artists around and I am happy to call him a friend.

Incidentally, did you notice the expression on the pumpkin behind Scarecrow's left leg? Beautiful. Now if Al could only have worked in a platypus, we'd both be happy.

My only objection to "Night of the...Charleston?" was the fact that you didn't use Letraset or Zip-a-tone lettering for the title. Don't be too worried about not being recognized as the Spectre. When, 4 years ago, I showed up as Captain Klutz, the closest any of the kids came was "Look, Pinocchio!" This year most seemed to know who I was. (What I want to know is: if a bunch of punk Rutland kids know who Captain Klutz is, why don't most comic fans?)

I enjoyed the letters page. This is a good sign. In almost any good fanzine the letters page should be as interesting as the rest of the zine. When Alan Light published All Dynamic (way back when) the features were generally only fair but the letters he got made the magazine.

Keep up the present rate of improvement and you will definitely keep me as a reader.

Best,
Thomas Hegeman
R.D. Chatham, N.Y. 12037

Rich,

Distance is no problem with the USPO! The Batmania #20 (postmarked Jan. 28) arrived today, Jan. 31! Disgusting!

I have to partially agree with the review (of Batmania #19 in The Rocket's Blast & Comicollector #115--RHM)! The printing isn't great on some pages! I know that my 2 solo illos weren't great, but they were nowhere near that dark! The eyes disappeared and there's gray all over! Our Batgirl duo was good, but even it didn't come out completely clear! The printer is gypping you! If it won't improve, I'd rather not have my last few better illos printed!

Well now, Batmania #20! The covers were absolutely great! Biljo's modern Bats is great, and Al Bradford's was good, too! Really liked the Batgirl.

The logos were all as good as last issue. This Schumer is really good with lettering!

I loved hearing about the parade! I've seen it in several mags & always wondered what it is really like. Chown's Supie was very nice.

The editorial comments really add to the index this issue.

Mercy's ad was very nice and the satire comic strip, too! Much better than in the Legion Outpost!

"Bat-Mite" was funny and good.

You didn't use my Comic Oddities & Chameleon Boy being seen in the Avengers is a good one!

The Ballot Box shouldn't have had the art so crammed on, but it alone was good. Now I have to look up all the issues.

I want more Wiretaps!!! And Better printing!!! Please send back the Batgirl/Catwoman; Batwoman (with handbag) & Batgirl (with batarang) if it doesn't improve. Sorry.

Yours,
Scott Taylor
103 Markham St.
Portland, Texas 78374

(And this is how Scott (with biiig mouth) reacts after begging me to use his art!!! It so happens Batman's eyes are supposed to disappear!

Seriously, you and the RB&CC do have a good point about my printing, which admittedly wasn't very good--I hope you'll find this issue's "new look" more satisfactory--RHM)

Dear Rich,

Got Batmania #19&20 today. A real nice zine. I won't waste your time talking about 19 as I probably won't be able to say anything that hasn't already been said, but #20 I will dissect piece by piece.

The cover was something else! It was one of the few times I had seen Bill's work, and I was amazed by the quality! I hope to see more of his work. How about some interior art?

"Night of the...Charleston?" was an interesting piece of writing.

The 'Tec index is a nice piece of work to have for future reference. Are you planning a Batman one? How about a Brave & Bold index of issues where Batman appeared?

"Batmanians Speak" is a necessary part of any 'zine. A place where readers can air their gripes publicly.

The comic strip was fantastic! Mercy and Jay were in top form. The humor was well done; not overdone, not underdone. It was just right. "The Batssignal," the shrunken costume, Elsie the cow on Commissioner Borden's wall, the dia-

logue between Borden and Batsman, Flash getting arrested for breeding, the fight, Rubin, the ending. All were just great! Let's have more!

The Batmite article was informative since I didn't know much about the character, except that he adored Batman.

Comic Oddities were indeed odd.

The BM Awards--though I never got to vote, the results pretty much agreed with my choices.

Gotham Wiretaps--very informative. Some of the info I had not read in The Comic Reader. By the way, does your news come straight from DC?

The back cover left me with mixed feelings, but I finally came to the conclusion that it was good and I liked it.

All in all, BM20 was a good issue. And I hope you're enjoying tremendous success with it. And hope you can carry Batmania to even greater success than Biljo White did when he was editor.

Best,
Tom Mason
705 Draper Rd.
Blacksburg, VA 24060

(Tom is the editor of The DC Reader, which is available from him for 35¢ and two 10¢ stamps. #3 was supposed to be out now, but I don't know anyone who's seen it yet--but I should talk! Batmania's supposed to be bi-monthly!

I'd like to see some interior art from Biljo White, too, but this time around he was too busy even to do the cover. Maybe next issue.

Most of the Gotham Wiretaps are from Bob Rozakis at DC, but he's not my only source--most prefer to remain anonymous. I've one called "Deep Throat," who meets me at a parking garage every time I--oops, wrong column! --RHM)

Dear Richard,

A friend of mine lent me his copy of Batmania #20 and I must admit to being impressed. The articles were interesting, although I didn't particularly care for the checklist. On the other hand, I recognize the research value of having a checklist like this, especially if you are somebody like Steranko or Les Daniels. I liked the parody too, although the panels were sometimes a little too dark. The front cover was really good, but the highlight of the issue was the back cover.

What makes this cover so great? Is it the atmosphere of the large overshadowing moon and the eerie bats, that omnipresent symbol of the mysterious crimefighter we have all come to idolize? Partly.

Is it The Scarecrow, macabre and menacing, who instantly rivets our attention and, having stolen that much of our pulsating consciousness, causes our gaze to shift automatically to a Batman whose waist looks several inches too thin or whose legs look several inches too thick? Yes, this too has something to do with the singular strikingness of this back cover. But neither of these answers reveals the true genius of this cover.

No, the true genius of the cover lies in the use not of the three main characters but in the subtle use of two supporting characters whom most probably did not even notice--the pumpkins!!! For those familiar with Al Bradford's work know that among all artists in the field today, both fan and pro, Al is the undisputed master of pumpkin portrayal. I have it on good source, indeed, I have seen photographic evidence, of his sculptural skill in this area around Halloween. Reports alleging the existence of one "Crazy Pumpkinheim" (a parody of the old Frank Fontaine character from the old Jackie Gleason show) are probably true. And there can be no doubt that once again Al has brought his genius in this particular area to the back cover of your magazine. If you can continue to attract talent like this to the pages of your magazine, I have no doubt the cause of Batmania

This is the BAT BANDIT. He first appeared in the daily MICKEY MOUSE comic strip on May 9, 1934. Five years later...May 1939... the BATMAN was born. I wonder if that Walt Disney comic strip, in any way, inspired Bob Kane?

---JIM JONES

From MIKE BARRIER'S, FUNNYWORLD.

(The full story of the Bat Bandit is now available in a full-color $1.50 edition from Whitman--which countless dealers are dying to get off their hands, as it hasn't been selling nearly as well as the three Carl Barks volumes that accompanied it!--RHM)

will be well served and your readers grateful.

Sincerely,
Esquebedo Demerary
1957 Shevvy Ave.
Renfew, N.Y. 12808

(Another pumpkin fancier! Well, it takes all kinds, I suppose. Please address all further correspondence regarding Al Bradford's expertise in this particular area to Jack Pumpkinhead, Winkie Country, Oz--RHM)

Dear Rich,

I got Batmania #20, so here're my thoughts.

1--Cover: without a doubt, the best Biljo illo I've ever seen! Superlative!

2--Contents: Nice logo, but aren't you stating the objective anymore? Robert Mallory, Jr. Assistant Editor? Thanks! I think. What am I supposed to do?

3--"Night of the--Charleston?" as narrated by The Spectre himself. I agree about the mask--supposing the '40's version should have had shadows on his face, it wouldn't be so at every angle at every moment in all the 1960's and '70's stories. The article was good. So that's how the Reaper came to be!

4--"Aren't we All?": I like to think so!

5--Index: Good, but it left out the same thing it did; that is, the fact that Detective #364 was a sequel to the Outsider series. The comments were invaluable. I often wondered about 'Dec #399--"Batman's Evil Eye." Perhaps it was advertently done to gauge reaction. If The Shadow doesn't know, either Schwartz or Robbins does! How come only 36 years more? 46 is more like it!

6--Letters: I hope Mike doesn't buy the character. O'Neil has his faults but he's given The Batman some of his best moments. If G.F/JLA #s 85-86 wasn't DC's first code drug story, then why did Schwartz give Mike such a hard time? So Tom Fagan himself was The Batman of the parades. I gathered that but I wasn't absolutely sure.

Whew! I guess my article didn't do too badly! Who's Mike Fasman? Maybe I'll send him a fan letter!

7--"Bats-Man Meets Dazedevil": Loved it! Bruce Wayne reading Playboy! The old DC emblem. The "superstitious, cowardly lot" bit, although reversed. The Flash cameo! Does Bats-Man try for the Frank Miller again in the next issue? This was the highlight of the issue!

8--"Bat-Mite": I don't agree with Dwayne, but it was interesting to read, regardless. I would have changed that last line to "the future for Bat-Mite looks good, or, to put it another way, virtually nonexistent." The 1940's Mxyzptlk was good, and the '70's one isn't bad. But not Bat-Mite, please!

9--"Comic Oddities and Bat-Facts": As always, highly enjoyable, especially items 3, 6 and 8 (heh, heh!), and 4 and 5.

10--"Ballot": I'm not surprised as to the newer Super-Villains vote, after 5 villain stories in a row! Batmans! was the Stan referred to on page 29 Lee?

11--"Gotham wiretaps": I miss the logo from #19! Otherwise fine.

12--Back cover--Beautiful! But how come no circle on The Batman's chest? Also, Batgirl doesn't fit in.

The Sum Up? Better than #18, and possibly #19 as well! As you may have guessed, I liked it a lot! Well, it's almost 2:00 in the morning, so until the next letter take care and never trust a Joker!

Robert Mallory
Houghton College
Houghton, N.Y. 14744

(You serve a very important function as Assistant Editor, Robert--your suggestions and comments do much to determine what goes into future issues--forgive me if I sound like Joe Orlando, but you give me so many good ones! The objective, for example, had to be forced out of last issue because the logo was too big--but thanks to you and the new reduced look, it's now back t stay.

It's true that addictive drugs were used in that Legion story, as well as in Deadman's origin story, but neither one depicted actual use of drugs available in the 20th century. Weisinger found it necessary to throw in an irrelevant reference to "the lotus-eaters of mythology"--and the Comics Code, besides, often fails to live up to its own standards.

Of course the back cover of #20 was anachronistic, depicting the new Batgirl with an old-look Batman--but Tom Fagan has this thing about the yellow circle. Originally the circle was there, but Tom took it off before he used the scene as a backdrop! In fact, he continues to insist he lives on Earth-2, as that's where Batman (despite Boltinoff's Brave & Bolds) doesn't wear the circle! Wonder what that does to Bridwell's thesis that the '72 Rutland stories prove the Marvel heroes live on Earth-1?--RHM)

The Literary BATMAN

BATMAN FROM THE '30'S TO THE '70'S
by Bob Rodi

As an anthology of Bat-literature over the years, Batman from the '30's to the '70's is absolutely tremendous, a tome so full of exciting Bat-tales (many of which have not been reprinted in recent memory) that to sit down with it could very well mean not getting up for some time...and yet, as a history of important events in Batman's career, it falls rather short.

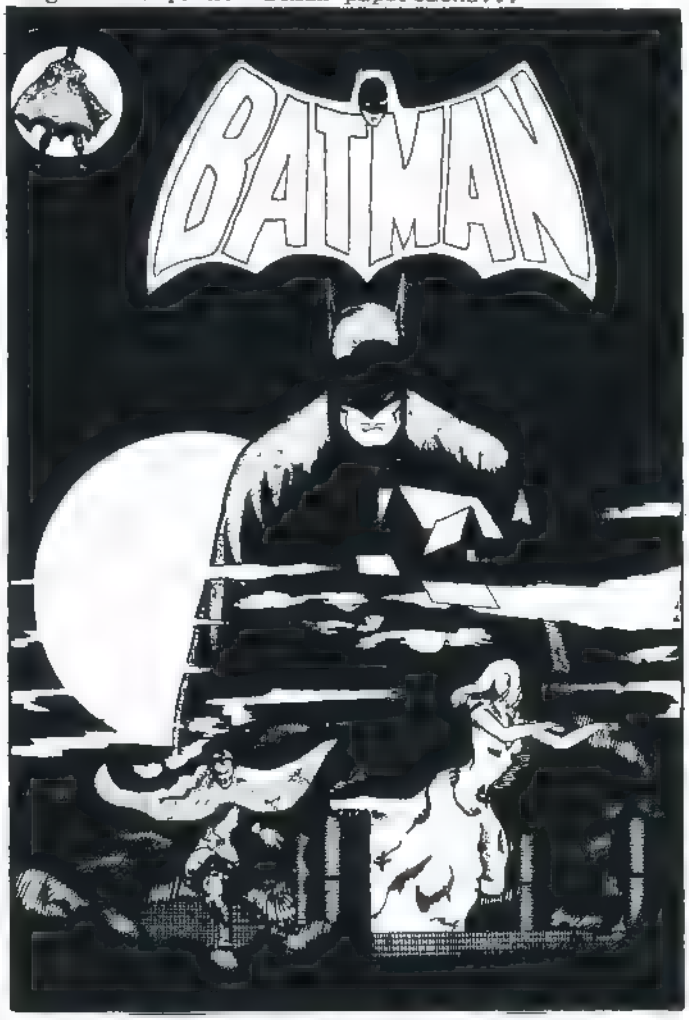
The obvious events are there: Batman's origin, Robin's, Batgirl's (both); also some Superman-Batman tales from the '50's, and Alfred's first appearance. However, the story "One Bullet Too Many" (from Batman #217) is made out to be the turning point in the Masked Manhunter's career and it just isn't--yet the last story of the sixties section is a ridiculous sf outing involving Batman, Batwoman, Robin, and (the original) Bat-Girl...and this leads straight into the Robbins-Novick-Giordano piece, which is worlds apart.

The transition that Robert Mallory noted on page 15 of Batmania #19 was not as sudden as this book would have us believe. E. Nelson Bridwell, in his introduction, tells us of the fabulous "New Look" of 1964 which was the first Batman breakthrough in history, but there is no evidence of the 1964-68 period in this book--and though some may dispute it, those were great years. (Note: the "new" Batgirl's debut from Detective #359 is indeed included, but it is the only story from this period, and it is placed, almost as an afterthought, after "One Bullet Too Many," causing not only confusion but a clashing of styles and moods that is very destructive to the organization of the book.)

The stories which are included, however, are all excellent; some are a bit trying and forced, but all (with the exception of, again, the Batgirl origin) are representative of the period of the chapter they appear in. Batfans can look forward to one of the first Riddler tales, the first Superman-Batman vs. Luthor-Joker duel, pages of full-color cover reproductions, Batclassics like "The Crime Predictor" and relatively unknown stories like "The Voyage of the First Batmarine."

I was particularly impressed by the '70's selections. This book was printed around 1971, and not much material was available...however, aside from "One Bullet Too Many" we have "The Secret of the Waiting Graves" from Detective #395, possibly the only 16-page work of art in the history of comics; a Man-Bat entry (from Detective #402); and finally "The Demon of Gotham Mansion" from Batman #227. The book's covers pages show to best advantage the similarity in layout between that issue #227's cover and the cover of Detective #31 (a Batman-Monk cover). It's only one of the unusual, intriguing tidbits that make this book so delightfully collectible.

Your library may never be the same again--but also, in the advertisement pages of some Warren magazines, you may find an offer for those long-out-of-print Batman paperbacks...



THE BATMAN--NOVEL HERO
by Dave Reeder

The character of Batman over the years has been contradictory--but unlike the problems associated with other superheroes (e.g. how many people escaped from Krypton, etc.) the three aspects of Batman clash terribly.

Well, what are these three aspects? you cry. Okay, they are: The Batman.
Batman--the detective.
Batman--camp comic.

The problem is, of course, that the first and the last are irreconcilable--so we have normally been offered Batman, the detective. But in the 1960's we were subjected to the camp Batman--why, it is hard to say. The carbon-copy Batman called Green Arrow had already shown everyone the total stupidity of the camp concept, and as the declining sales figures proved the camp Batman must have been a do-or-die effort.

What happened was of course beyond belief! One wonders what our old friend Dr. Wertham, who thought the '50's Batman and Robin were "a wish-dream of two homosexuals living together," would have made of the '60's--especially the 1966 film Batman, which included the Catwoman in tight leather and the Joker with lipstick and lilac suits!

In fact, the whole "camp" apparatus could not be supported nor justified by the Batman mythology--what had our Batman of the night to do with Batmites or Bathounds (--what was that mutt called?)? No, if the Batman needed a dog he would surely be a slavering hell-hound from the night, not an anemic lapdog with an eyepatch!

But of all the '60's camp cultural overflow, the most unbelievable was the Batman film--Holy Hollywood! Showing a complete lack of knowledge of even the most elementary technique of either the comic or the film, it must represent about the deepest level to which comic culture has been plunged! Or must it? Could anything be worse?

It could be and it was--in two novels by Winston Wyon. Eeyow! Karoom! Or so it says on my copies of Batman vs. the Fearsome Foursome and Batman vs. the Three Villains of Doom. For didn't the film have at least a feel of the nostalgic naievete of the old Flash Gordon serials, plywood spacecraft and all?

But the books--wow! I guess I should tell you the plots, but I don't know if our collective stomachs could take it. Let's leave it at the covers--the first has the Dynamic Duo on the Batcycle looking like a badly-painted platic cornflake toy liable to be thrown away by even the most avid fan of 3rd-rate culture, and the second shows Batman looking like a constipated turkey on the cover and sounding little better inside!

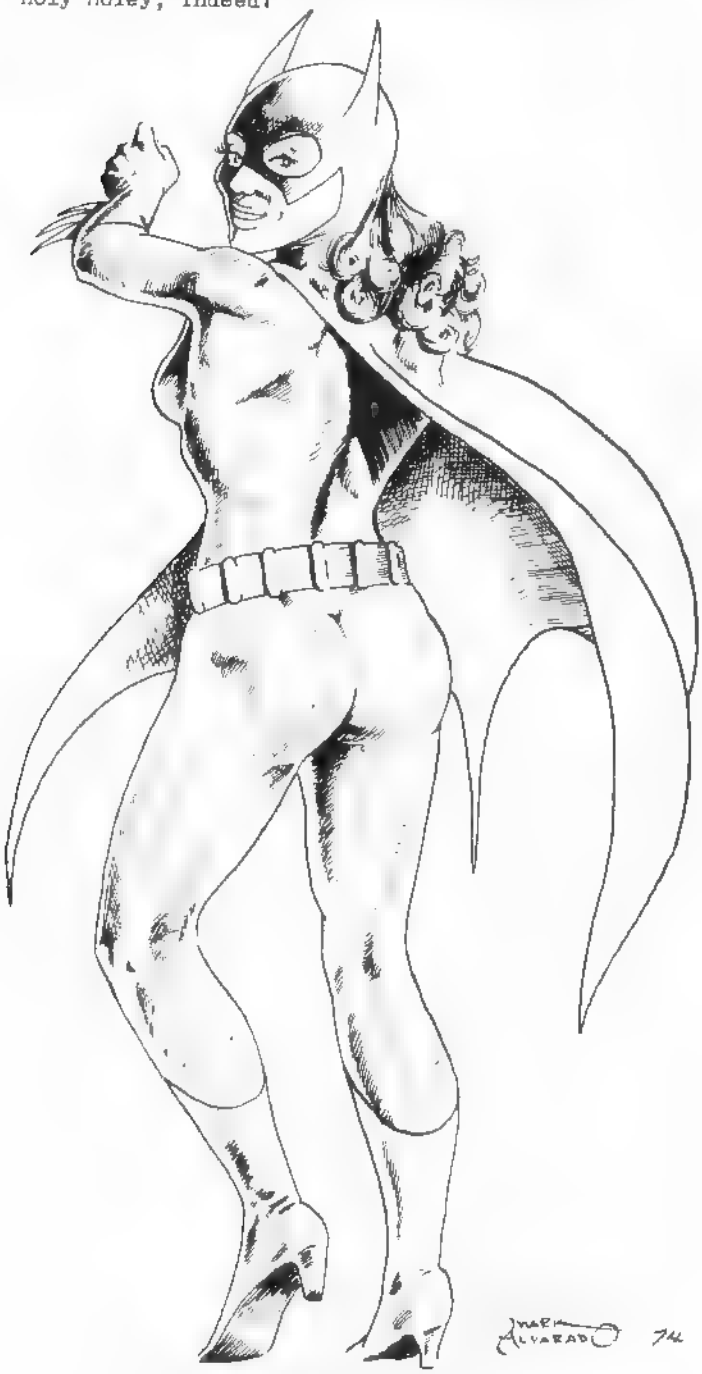
These cover photos sum up the full horrors of the film and the complete unsuitability of Adam West as the Caped Crusader--too butch and out of condition. They should have given the part to Clint Eastwood.

But how do the novels stand up in relation to the comic mythos? Quite simply, they do not. They stand as the final insult to Bob Kane's concept--but not too far ahead of may other aspects of his creation! So, you say, there could be nothing worse than Batmite, Tomorrow Batman, Double-Batman, Rainbow Batman or all the other ephemeral members of that great Bat-family in the sky? well, at least they were vaguely connected to the Bat-saga--not so these books. They fail as valid aspects of the Bat-mythos, as valid examples of pulp literature (The Batman could take apart Doc Savage, G-8, The Spider and Dr. Fu Manchu before breakfast!) and as valid novels. I can think of no other aspect of Bat-ephemera that could have done much good for The Batman but which in fact has committed the ultimate sin--the trivialization of a major part of our 20th century folk-heritage.

A part of all of us who love comic culture dies when we read these books. Winston Wyon has failed to see that the Batman's strength is the total believability of his unreality--instead he gives us a caricature of a caricature of reality and it stinks! The Batman is real--he is every

person who knows that his planet won't explode conveniently to make him Superman, but can provide the cover of night to let him seek out the weeds of crime (sorry--wrong masked avenger!). Gotham City is here and we are the Bat-fans!

So if you see these books at the next convention or are tempted to rip them off your young cousin--go home and read the Man-Bat saga! Holy Moley, indeed!



THE PAPERBACK BATMAN
by Robert Mallory

The year was 1966, a big year for Batman albeit not a very qualitative one. The Batman TV show was at the peak of its popularity, so it was no surprise that Signet Paperbacks decided to cash in on what was known as the "Camp" craze. From March to August a series of Batman paperbacks numbering to a total of six appeared on the racks next to the James Bond books.

The first was Signet paperback #D2939, entitled simply Batman. Inside were 187 pages worth of Batman stories, which translated into seven reprints. The first tale was the short Batman origin, taken in this instance from Batman #1, "The Legend of the Batman." The then dated 1940 look for Batman was a far cry from the campy though slick "new look" Batman of the sixties.

In fact, none of the paperbacks that reprinted Batman stories ever included any of the "new look" stories; they all prided themselves in the back cover captions in featuring "the first adventures...the very best adventures of the Caped Crusaders. Actually, with the exception of Batman's origin the earliest stories featured were taken from 1952.

The next tale was "The Web of Doom." Not a bad story, this was one of the many "human interest" stories featured in the Batman comics of the very early fifties. Third in line was the "Fanmail of danger!" a humorous tale of Batman's career being hampered by the huge amount of fanmail he receives. This story, as you may have guessed, was made to order for the "camp" craze.

"The Crazy Crime Clown" followed, featuring, of course, The Joker. This adventure concerns The Joker's getting himself committed to an institution in order to learn the hiding place of one million dollars one of the inmates had embezzled. Batman realizes this because he knows The Joker isn't insane??!! Oh well, times change and so do comic characters. All in all, this was easily the best story in the book.

After this was the case of "The Crime Predictor," telling of a machine that could predict crime. In the end the machine proves to be a fake used to help a Mr. Blank's plans for running the underworld. Seventh was "The Man who Could Change Fingerprints," a story that had been made into an episode of the Superman TV show of the 1950's.

Finally there was "The Testing of Batman." A professor asks Batman and Robin to the Psychological Foundation to scientifically test their abilities. When Batman reaches the Foundation he is taken prisoner by an underworld czar who puts Batman and Robin through an "improved" series of tests in order to get Batman to unwittingly show him how to bypass the safeguards at the Gotham Mint. All this paperback's stories were above average, though not the classic adventures.

D2940 came out the next month, this time with an original Batman novel by Winston Lyon. Despite the picture of the TV Batman on the cover, the story was not the least bit campy. Titled Batman vs. Three Villains of Doom, it was truly an excellent story of The Joker, Penguin, and Catwoman competing for the Emmy of the Underworld --the Tommy, a gold-plated Tommy gun. To win the award all one had to do was defeat and hopefully destroy the Dynamic Duo. Besides being well written, the story had one other great advantage: the writer obviously knew the character of Batman, and I don't mean the TV version.

Number Three of the Batman paperbacks was #D2969, Batman vs. The Joker. Included were five stories: "The Challenge of The Joker," in which the Prince of Crime challenges Batman by committing crimes concerning the "original four elements," fire, air, earth, and water; "The Joker's Winning Team," which had the Joker hire specialist criminals and then trade them away for different specialists; "The Joker's Millions," which deals with The Joker inheriting millions of dollars from an old enemy (The money turns out to be mostly conterfeit, proving to be the gangLord's idea of a joke!); "The Joker's Journal," in which The Joker makes a newspaper that aids criminals; and "Batman--Clown of Crime," where due to a strange lab accident the bodies of Batman and The Joker switch minds.

Number Four of the paperbacks was the last to reprint old Batman stories. The book, Batman

vs. The Penguin, featured four Penguin stories and one Catwoman tale. Apparently no plans for a Catwoman paperback ever got past the talking stages. "The Parasols of Plunder" leads off the book, as The Penguin gives up his Bird crimes to get into the umbrella business, which of course leads to "fowl play." In fact, at the story's end The Penguin's capture is effected by means of birds!

"The Golden Eggs" has The Penguin committing crimes decided by some eggs he is in the process of hatching. It's back to birds again in "The Penguin's Fabulous Fowls" when The Penguin captures mythological birds that eventually escape. Batman soon reveals that the giant birds are really machines. "The Return of The Penguin" has The Penguin come out of retirement (he had been inactive since the late fifties; this story was originally published in the pre-new-look sixties because he had been called a "has-been." Rounding out this collection was "The Sleeping Beauties of Gotham City," as The Catwoman arranges to win a beauty contest in order to smuggle some diamonds. This was number D2970, incidentally.

D2980 was Bill Adler's "Funniest Fan Letters to Batman." Bill Adler is responsible for most of those "Letters To..." books you may have seen through the years. This one is about par for the course.

The last of the Batman paperbacks was Batman vs. The Fearsome Foursome, which was based on the Batman movie of 1966--which was terrible. This book isn't too bad, however, as the movie was adapted here by Winston Lyon; who happily cut out much of the campy dialogue and made the Dynamic Duo's escapes from death more their own doing rather than the incredible stretches of luck the movie portrayed. Also, The Joker had a little more to do than in the movie version. Even so, Lyon could not totally save this one. The Fearsome Foursome, by the way, were The Joker, The Penguin, The Riddler and The Catwoman.

The closest thing after that to a new Batman paperback was #31 of the new series of Big Little Books. The story was called "The Cheetah Caper." The Cheetah is a criminal who can run inhumanly fast, but to keep up his strength he has to consume unbelievably huge amounts of peanut butter. Published in 1969, during the time of the Batman cartoon show, this really bad story was written by George S. Elrick. This hardly jibes with the facts, as Mr. Elrick did an extremely creditable job on the Tarzan Big Little Book based on the current newspaper strip. It's too bad the Whitman Publishing Company didn't hire Winston Lyon for the job.

Perhaps someday DC will put out some novelizations of some of the better Batman stories of the seventies. Each one could be an anthology with covers drawn by Frank Frazetta. Well, I can dream, can't I? Say, maybe if we all bombard National Periodicals with letters...

PLAY IT AGAIN, SUPERMAN or RUN THAT ONE BY ME AGAIN

by Edwin Murray

Mort Weisinger edited the entire Superman family in the early 1960's. He had one habit that should have caused much mention in fandom--but hasn't. He took old Superman stories and had them redone for new issues. Why he did it is a mystery but I've found 12 cases in which he did use old stories. There may be some I missed.

The earliest one I found was "The Super-Clown of Metropolis" (Superman #136, Apr. 1960). It is taken from "The Man Who Couldn't Laugh" (Superman #56, Jan.-Feb. 1949). Both deal with an old man who will give a lot of money to charity if anyone can make him laugh. The winning gags are different.

The next story was "Superman's Flight from Lois Lane" (Lois Lane #20, Oct. 1960), and it is an almost exact copy of "Superman's Other Life" (Superman #84, Sept-Oct. 1953). Both have Clark Kent going back in time to avoid Lois and taking a job as a disc-jockey rather than a reporter. There are slight changes in the details and framing of the story.

"Voyage to Dimension X" (Action #271, Dec. 1960) was based on "Destination X" (Superman #83, July-Aug. 1953). The main idea of Superman lured into a fake space-globe and trapped there by crooks is the same. Details and the escape are different. Luthor is in the recent one.

"Lois Lane's X-Ray Vision" (LL #22, Jan. 1961 is almost exactly the same as a story by the same title in Action #202 (Mar. 1955). Lois gets glasses that give her x-ray vision. Updating of a few minor details.

"The Flame-Dragon from Krypton" (Superman #142, Jan. 1961) is an updated version of "The Beast from Krypton" (Superman #78, Sept-Oct. 1952) The Beast is identical but the rest of the story has been updated.

"The Great Superman Hoax" (Superman #143, Feb. 1961) is almost identical to "Paul Paxton Alias Superman" (Action #213, Feb. 1956). In both stories an impostor gives Lois enough clues to convince her that he is Superman so that he can get something from the Planet offices. Minor updating.

"Superboy's Big Brother" (Superboy #89, June 1961) has the same basic premise as "Superman's Big Brother" (Superman #80, Jan-Feb. 1953). Both have a space traveler, who met Jor-El on Krypton, being mistaken for Kal-El's brother when he lands on Earth, loses his memory, and is identified by the map of the route followed by the rocket that brought Jor-El's son to Earth. The rest of the story is different.

"Superman Owes a Billion Dollars" (Superman #148, Oct. 1961) is almost identical to "Superman's Billion Dollar Debt" (Superman #114, July 1957). Both have Superman gathering valuables to pay off taxes that an Internal Revenue man has discovered that he owes. He ends up drawing a check on the Bank of Krypton and claiming everyone on Earth as dependants. Minor updating.

"The Man Who Saved Kal-El's Life" (Action #281, Oct. 1961) is very close to "The Man Who went to Krypton" (Superman #77, July-Aug. 1952). Years ago a man invented a teleporter and went to Krypton. Now his machine is captured by crooks and he must tell Superman his story. Expanded Krypton sequence in newer one. Professor and machine look the same in both.

"Superboy's Romance with Cleopatra" (Adventure #291, Dec. 1961) is almost identical to "Superboy and Cleopatra" (Adventure #183, Dec. 1952). Lana Lang impersonates Cleopatra to attract Superboy. The story is updated a bit to include Professor Potter, and the ending retains the same premise but is updated to include more recent developments.

"The Duel of the Superboys" (Adventure #295, Apr. 1962) is taken from a story by the same title in Adventure #175 (Apr. 1952). Superboy discovers that a foreign superhero was himself suffering from amnesia. Very similar. Professor Lang is in the more recent one.

"Superboy Meets Steelboy" (Adventure #302, Nov. 1962) is just like "Superboy Meets Superlad" (Adventure #199, Apr. 1954). Underground city has robot hero based on Superboy. Very similar.

Why were these stories warmed over? Maybe someone kept missing deadlines. Maybe someone pulled a fast one on Mort. Maybe he just liked the old stories. Whatever the reason, many stories were recycled. Can anyone out there find any more twice-told tales?

There's no doubt about it--this is the year for Batman! He and his spinoffs now appear regularly in no less than six books, all appearing at least seven times a year--which even exceeds Superman's current count. What's more, no less than two more such titles will soon be appearing.

One, as you may have heard, is devoted to the Man-Bat, and will be edited by the latest addition to the DC editorial staff, Gerard Conway. Conway will also write the first issue, to be illustrated by Steve Ditko and Al Milgrom; it will be followed by a couple of Paul Levitz issues and a Marty Pasko two-parter with The Creeper, the most popular of the revived DC characters thus far.

The other new book is a 50%er along the lines of The Superman Family, to be called (what else?) The Batman Family. It will contain new stories of Robin, Batgirl, or both, backed up by reprints (often with altered logoes, a la FSF) of Robin, Batgirl, Commissioner Gordon and the various villains. The first bimonthly issue, on sale in June, will contain the Robin/Batgirl story originally scheduled for First Issue Special #6.

FIS #5, by the way, will contain an updated Manhunter by Kirby (unlike Archie Goodwin's version, this is a totally new individual), and #6 will contain the long-awaited (?) Dingbats by him. The Creeper will battle Batman's old foe, The Human Firefly, in #7 in a story by Mike Fleisher, with art by Ditko (of course) and Mike Royer. Future issues will include Gorilla City (Grodd's and Solovar's home explored by Cary Bates, Elliot Maggin and Berni Wrightson if he has the time), Private Eye (a futuristic detective agency by Denny O'Neil) and just about every inactive DC character this side of Tomahawk. Green Lantern (perhaps with Green Arrow again), Plastic Man, The Atom, Challengers of the Unknown, some of the Quality heroes, Dr. Fate, and Metal Men are all in preparation!

Also to be edited by Conway are revivals of the Blackhawks--and All-Star Comics, featuring the Justice Society once again! The Star-Spangled Kid and Powergirl (an Earth-2 Supergirl) will be joining the JSA, and the Earth-2 Robin will also be prominently featured. Jack Kirby is being considered for the first issue, but it's uncertain whether he'll make it, because--

The [illegible]mobile Kirby is returning to Marvel at the end of April, where he will once more pick up the Fantastic Four, Captain America, and Thor. He's leaving a few things behind at DC--art for Kung-Fu Fighter #3, perhaps the Challengers FIS and some Sandmans--but in his last days at DC, he's trying to get as far ahead as possible on Justice, Inc. and Kamandi (the latter title with Conway scripts so he can concentrate on art. Perhaps some of these will be inked in New York, so people other than Royer and Berry will (thank God) get a chance at inking Kirby.

Despite the fact that Ernie Chua is now the regular Batman artist, there'll be some more art by Novick, Aparo, Wrightson, Simonson and the other highly-acclaimed people who've guided Batman in the past. Elliot Maggin has stories coming up about cattle smuggling and vampires, while David V. Reed is writing some more traditional crime stories--and Mike Uslan and Bob Rozakis are collaborating on a three-part serial for Detective about a pirate-type out to kill all three BatMen--whatever that means!

Although Batman isn't appearing in The Joker, the book isn't off limits to other heroes--in addition to The Creeper in #3, Green Arrow will show up in #4, and the Royal Flush Gang in #5--with The Shadow being considered for the future. Beginning with Elliot Maggin's script for #4, he and Marty Pasko will alternate as Joker scripters.

The ever-confusing Justice League schedule, at last report was: 120&121: Adam Strange and Kanjar Ro (by Cary Bates), 122: How the JLA members learned each others' identities (by Pasko), 123 and 124: The JLA goes to Earth-0 in the annual JSA guest shot (by and featuring Bates and Maggin), 125&126: The JLA meets Two-Face (by Conway), 127 is also by Conway, and in 128 and 129 Wonder Woman returns (by Pasko).

Following Flash Comics #1, Famous First Edition will skip a month; the space being filled by an extra ACE, Origins of Super-Villains. But the title will not, despite rumor, be cancelled; Superboy #1 is in the works, as probably is (now that the lawsuit has been settled--in National's favor) Superman #1. Apparently Detective #27 did not do well in reprint, so DC is shying away from non-first issues--which is why they haven't done More Fun #101 first. Unless All-Star #3 does well, therefore, don't look for any more first appearances that weren't first issues...

Elsewhere--in addition to Jack Kirby, Marvel now has Tony Isabella back on a full-time basis. Ironically, no sooner has DC picked up the 50% giant format they pioneered, than Marvel has

reprint at cut rates! All Marvel's books (except Marvel Classics, a 5¢, adult, 48-page book featuring Classics Illustrated reprints--acquired from that defunct company--with new Bill Wane covers) will now take the 25¢, 36-page format. (DC is also cutting down on its Giants--and they'll soon have only 20 pages of new art.) There are no plans for new material in Marvel Classics at present, though Roy Thomas is considering an adaptation of The Wizard of Oz (and Tony Isabella would like to adapt Naked Came the Stranger).

The Giant-Size titles that duplicate regular ones, like Avengers and Man-Thing, will be dropped; those that do not (like Invaders and X-Men will become regular 25¢ books. But most of their original backups will survive; Red Sonja will get her own book, and Howard the Duck will move into Arrgh!

Another new Marvel title consists of the Champions, founded by the Angel when he inherits a fortune and including Hercules, Powerman, Iceman, and the Black Widow (who's broken up with Daredevil). Moon Dragon joins the Avengers, while

e goes into the past [illegible] eams up with Marvel's western heroes. Captain erica will continue to belong, but will be very sy with [illegible] in his own book.

ne more item before I leave Marvel--it may ound like a gag, but I heard it from a source hat doesn't kid! Marvel has reportedly negotiated with DC to have Superman meet Spider-Man in a forthcoming Marvel Team-Up! If true, it can only indicate a new spirit of cooperation between the two companies, and what will come of it no mortal can say...

dds and ends: Mike Friedrich is writing Adult Sub-Barbarian for Atlas, while Mike Oskar and Alex oth are preparing an eight-page question story for Charlton. On the screen, Marvel's Spidey movie will be written by Brian Clemens, a British writer and editor for such programs as The Protectors and The Avengers (no connection with the Marvel group), while Mario Puzo of Godfather fame will script the Supes movie. Wonder if they'll ever try a film with both!--ed

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BY RAYMOND L. MILLER

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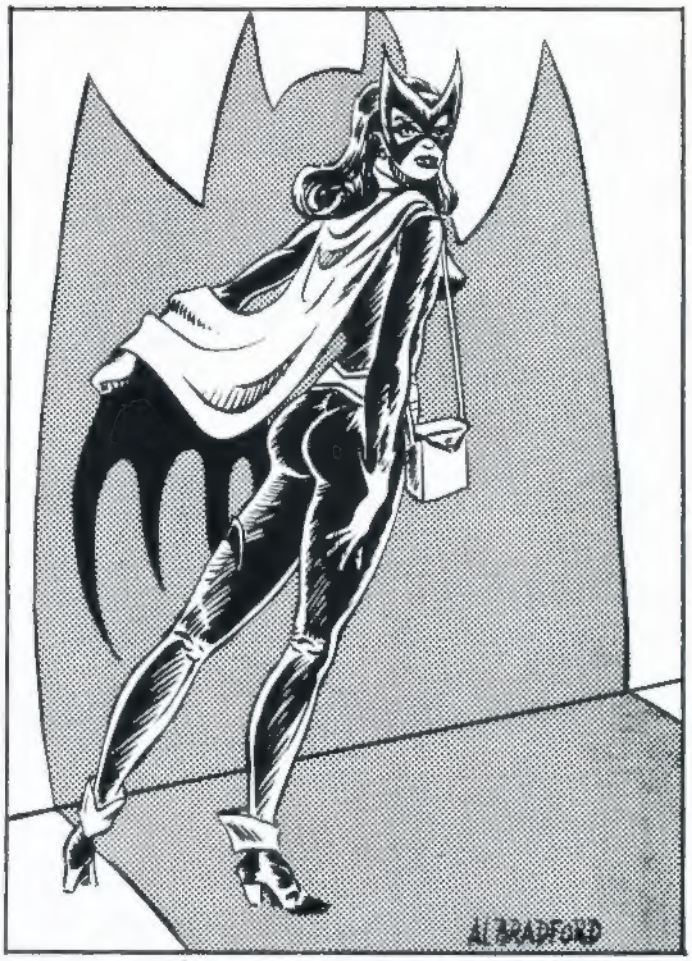

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	The Menace of the Sky Creature	8
#136	The Case of the Crazy Crimes	"
	The Town that Hated Batman	"
	The Challenge of the Joker	9
Feb.,	'61 #137	
	Robin's New Boss	10
	The Bandit with 1,000 Brands	8
	Teacher from the Stars	"
#138	Batman's Master	"
	The Simple Crimes of Simple Simon	"
	The Secret of the Sea Beast.	9
#139	The Blue Bowman (Signalman's new identity)	8
	The Island of 1,000 Traps	9
	Bat-Girl (you're right, Jack Schiff is editor!)	8

#140	The Ghost of the Joker	9
	The Charmed Life of Batman	8
	The Eight Wonder of Space	9
#141	The Crimes of the Clock Master	8
	Ruler of the Bewitched Valley	9
	Batman's Robot Guardian	8
#142	The Race of Death	8
	The Crimes of the Ancient Mariner	8
	Batwoman's Junior Partner	9
#143	The Twice Told Tale of Batman and Robin	8
	The Blind Batman	9
	Bat-Hound and the Creature	8
#144	The Alien Feud on Earth	9
	The Man Who Played Batman (The Joker)	8
	Bat-Mite Meets Bat-Girl	9
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	Hunt for Mr. 50	8
	The Tiniest Villain in the World	8
	The Son of the Joker (with Batman II & Robin II)	10
#146	Batman and Robin's Magical Powers	8
	The Secret of the Leopard Boy	8
	The Deadly Curse of Korabo	9
#147	The Plants of Plunder	8
	The Secret of Mystery Island	8
	Batman Becomes Bat-Baby	9
#148	The Alien Force Twins	8
	The Boy Who Was Robin	9
	The Joker's Greatest Triumph	9
	The Maestro of Crime	8
	The Invaders from the Past	9
	Batman Tunes In on Murder	8
#150	The Secret Behind the Stone Door	9
	The Girl Who Stole Batman's Heart	8
	Robin, the Super Boy Wonder	8
#151	Batman's New Secret Identity	16
	The Mystery Gadget from the Stars	9
#152	Formula for Doom	8
	The False Face Society (The Joker)	9
	Memorial to an Astronaut	8
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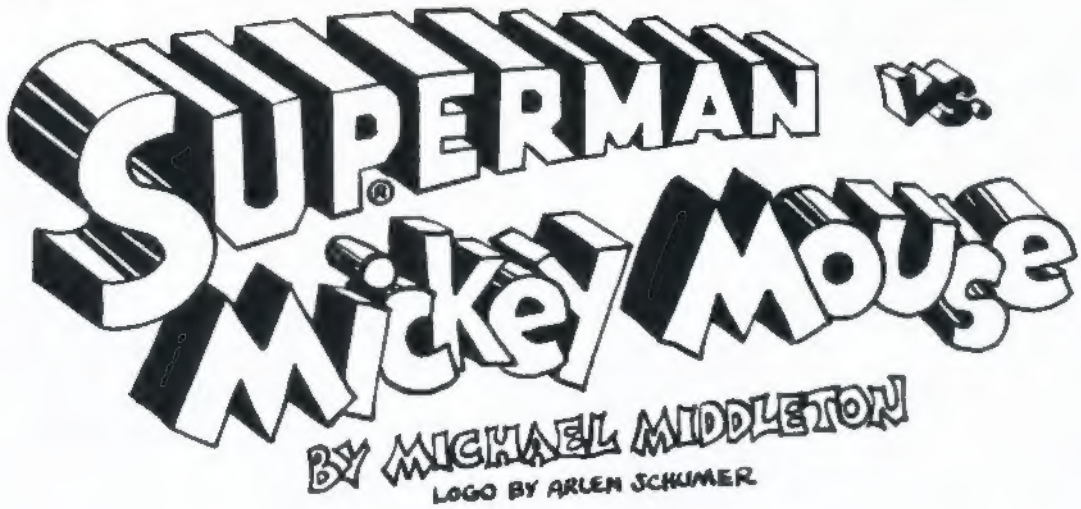
	Prisoners of Three Worlds (Chapter I)	
	Death from Beyond (Ch. II)	
	Dimension of Doom (Ch. III)	25
#154	Danger Strikes Four (Batman II and Robin II)	9
	The Amazing Odyssey of Batman and Robin	8
	The Strange Experiment of Dr. Dorn	8
#155	Batman's Psychic Twin	13
	The Return of the Penguin	13
#156	The Secret of the Ant-Man (prologue)	8
	Robin Dies at Dawn	17
#157	The Villain of the Year	12
	The Hunt for Batman's Secret Identity (Mirror Man)	13
#158	Ace--the Super Bat-Hound	9
	The Secret of the Impossible Perils	8
	Batman and Robin--Imposters	8
#159	The Great Calyface-Joker Feud	16
	The Boyhood of Bruce Wayne, Jr.	9
160	The Mystery of Madcap Island	13
	The Alien Boss of Gotham City	12
Feb.,	'64 #161	
	The New Crimes of the Mad-Hatter	12
	The Bat-Mite Hero	13
#162	The Batman Creature	13
	Robin's New Secret Identity	9
#163	Bat-Girl--Batwoman II (Batman II and Robin II)	12
	The Joker Jury	13

Changes were being made at National...the Super-Hero was back on the scene, with Julius Schwartz leading the editorial way. Times, and comics, were changing, and the top brass in the DC offices felt that Batman needed to change along with them. He had to be made more believable, more relevant. Who was the best man to tackle this challenge? Julius Schwartz came in, and proceeded to make startling changes and renovations in the Batman legend.

Next issue will chronicle these landmark stories, so be sure not to miss Batmania #22 for the conclusion of this valuable Index to Batman!



Being a comic collector (the only one in town over 21 years, I believe; a Batman fan, damn it!), not discounting the fact that I have lived a number of years in Metropolis, Illinois; SUPERMAN LAND, U.S.A., has led me through request and want to share some of the details surrounding "Supie's Greatest Hoax," or better known as "The Metropolis Folley."

(The following is partially based on information derived from The Metropolis Planet and Chamber of Commerce, Metropolis, U.S.A.).

To start, I want to reply to everyone whipping the underdog, we couldn't have had Metropolis' Folley without National's support and help. I've read a lot of discrediting opinions about our little burg and want to set the record straight as that the blame for failure doesn't rest on our shoulders alone.

When Mr. Infantino met at the Chamber of Commerce office with the interested members of Metropolis Recreation Inc. (MRI), there was excitement, visions of development and profit loomed.

Superman's own brand of Disney-type popularity!

The publicity was there, the drive was there, NBC was there, but where was the money for the project?

National wanted community interest before they would invest in us. The community, therefore, to profit and show interest, purchased stock to meet a set value by National—approxi mately $50,000, later increased. When this stock was sold and the community interest put into the project, National was supposed to back it with expertise and financial effort.

Metropolis realized that alone they could not hope to build such elaborate complexes envisioned by Neal Adams and National.

National did supply the expertise, such as original art, comics, George Reeves' costume, etc., but no financial support came or particular guidance on layout.

So instead of holding the stock and building later, the project progressed into refinishing (mostly repainting) an old Roller Rink into a penny ante museum which quickly lost money and became a mausoleum.

This quickie effort, I understand, was Phase I in a plan developed by National.

Still without other financial support, the MRI decided the best course of action to regain their money was to auction the fixtures, etc., to put back into the project.

Here the connection between the MRI and National began to break ties.

One unmentioned factor was that National took a percentage of the profits immediately at the first summer of opening, as they owned the Superman character.

Sol Harrison has taken home the display items to New York, people in Metropolis have lots of money in their stock, and the deal is negotiable. The ties are broken while Superman's paintings still haunt the area and a less dramatic attempt is yet underway by the MRI to build a recreation project.

The Chamber of Commerce, I am told, is helping the MRI to get off again by obtaining a Feasibility Study for the project's future. They have land under observation, with a hopeful 75/25 Federal Grant and possible state grants.

The people are hopeful they will go on with the project, whether it is a Superman Land or not depends on National, as now ties are severed.

Not trying to get too technical, as most of these were facts from the Chamber of Commerce, one other thing I would mention is that National had the chance to affect the outcome and didn't. I understand that letters of intent are needed or desired in helping obtain Grants. (These are from people with money who don't necessarily have to use it, but only write a letter on intent). The point is that Harrison was called and asked for help on this point and none was received.

I hope that Metropolis receives its Grants and that Superman gets a Center. Perhaps the twain shall never meet—but it was a nice thought.

So we leave you in limbo here at Metro--and hope that any questions or corrections will be directed through the Metropolis Chamber of Commerce, Metropolis, Illinois, 62960.

T. LINEHAN '78